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THE PLACE OF THANKSGIVING
by Paris Reidhead

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Summary: The sermon emphasizes the importance of gratitude and obedience to God's command to give thanks in everything, highlighting the consequences of ungratefulness and the benefits of a grateful heart.

Duration: 31:54 Topics: "Thanksgiving"

Scripture References: Romans 1:18-32, 2 Timothy 3:2

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DESCRIPTION

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In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being thankful and warns against the consequences of being unthankful. He references 2 Timothy 3:2, where Paul warns that in the last days, people will be unthankful among other negative traits. The preacher also refers to Romans 1:21, where it is stated that the people were unthankful and did not glorify God. He explains that failing to give thanks can lead to vain imaginations and disobedience. The sermon emphasizes the need to be grateful and obedient to God.

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CONTENT

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Thank you for that message in song. It prepares the way, as has the entire service. Today we are thinking about the command to give thanks.

And whenever you have a commandment, you also have the promise of blessing. And with that, you have sanctions. It's the sanctions we shall see first.

That is, what is the result, the consequences, of failing to obey the

command? There are two scriptures that I would use as text. The first, in 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 2. And the second, and the primary text, in Romans chapter 1, verse 21. So in 2 Timothy chapter 3, Paul is writing to the young man Timothy, and giving him instructions, which include warnings.

This third chapter would be particularly important to a young man beginning in the ministry. This know also, and I begin reading with first verse, that in the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, and disobedient to parents. Notice the next word.

Unthankful. Not thanking. And right next to that is unholy.

Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. From such turn away. That little word, unthankful, sandwiched in the midst of such terrible words as we've read, and such a dire warning.

Now please to Romans chapter 1. Again I must read just a little bit more than the text so that you get the strength and the context. In verse 16, Paul declares, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed, from faith to faith, as it is written, that just shall live by faith.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold or suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God. Now notice this strange statement. Neither were thankful.

And notice the consequences. But became vain in their imaginations,

their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to become wise,
they became fools, and changed the glory of God and the uncorruptible God into an image made like the corruptible man, and so on.

Now we understand the difference between praise and thanksgiving.
Praise
is adoration of God for who he is. Thanksgiving is gratitude to God
for
what he has done.

Because they are so similar, they are not to be confused. And because they differ, we are to understand the difference. And because they occur
close together, we're to understand why they are important and not the same.

So many people think praise is a synonym of thanksgiving and thanksgiving of praise. But not so. Praise is adoration of God because of his character.

It exalts his attributes. And in praising God, very frequently, as we do
dwell upon his character and his attributes, we are also reminded of those deeds of grace that he has done, and so we move into
thanksgiving.
And thanksgiving leads to the contemplation of God's grace.

And frequently, as we think about what he has done for us, we begin to praise him. But they differ. They differ, and we need to understand the
difference.

Now, unthankful, unholy, what a neighborhood to live in. From such
turn
away, said Paul to young Timothy. And here, because when they knew God,
they glorified him, not as God, neither were thankful.

Now, being in gratitude doesn't seem to be much of a sin, does it, as compared to murder and stealing and lying. These are black sins. But unthankful, why should anyone get so excited about it? That was the way
David felt.

Remember the occasion when David had, in 1 Chronicles 21, when David decided that he wanted to know just how many people he had in Israel and
in Judah. And so, contrary to God's commandment, he gave an order to his

associates, to those under him, to number the people. Now, we are told that it was an effort of Satan to provoke David to sin against Jehovah.

That it was Satan that stirred up David's mind. And you see, what happened was, God wanted David to be grateful for the victories he was giving, regardless of how many people there were, because God can save whether by many or by few. And David was to recognize that victory came from the Lord and not from the multitude of people that he had.

But David was unthankful to God for the victory, and he was disobedient. And so, instead of giving thanks, he counted, or had them counted. Well, what happened? God came to David and gave him an option through the prophet.

He said, now, you can have one of three things. You can either have a plague come, you can be defeated in battle, and David wisely said, look, I've sinned. You have to do whatever seems best to you.

And God visited those very men whom he counted and counted on. And because David had sinned, 70,000 strong warriors, men of arms, died in Israel. Seems a little bit out of balance, doesn't it? 70,000 dying because of one man's sin, but you see how important it was.

It wasn't very big, just numbering the people, but look at the consequences of it. No wonder when David recovered, when he confessed his sin and the plague had been lifted, he wrote, now, therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious name. You know, have you ever realized how many ways David is like us? He was a slow learner.

You know, it's like somebody with his mule. You have to take a two-by-four to get his attention, and apparently that's the way David was, and this was some two-by-four that was swung. If you ask me, it was God's way of teaching us that there's no such thing as a little sin.

Now, back to Romans. Look what happened there. First, it says, neither were thankful.

They knew God. They glorified Him not as God, and then this little sin of failing to give thanks for His creation, failing to give thanks for all that He had done and all that He had brought, failing to give Him glory because of the revelation that they had received in themselves and from God, and they were not thankful. What followed? Look, they came

vain in their imaginations.

Vain imaginations replaced obedience. The hearts was darkened.

Thinking

themselves to be wise, they became fools, and in their folly they changed the glory of God into the likeness of birds and animals, and so

it says, and God gave them up.

To uncleanness, God gave them up. To vile affection, God gave them over

to a reprobate mind. Why? Because of unthankfulness.

They weren't grateful. You see, what happened was when they failed to give thanks, that sin gave place to the enemy who could come in and begin to control their thinking. The Scripture is very explicit.

It says, resist the devil and he will flee from you. Whom resist? Steadfast in the faith. But the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and you don't start to get smart until you start to be afraid of God.

And it was this. God had been so blessing Israel under David that David

just lost sight of the fact that God blesses when we obey, and he deals

with us as the consequences when we disobey. Disobedience brings its own consequences.

It's like this. The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him. Picture your life as lived inside of a high board fence, like in the days of Tom Sawyer, where the boards were nailed up on the frame and

nailed from the outside, and they're pretty secure because you couldn't push them in.

You had to pull them off to get it loose. You could hammer on it, but it

wouldn't loosen the board. Just drive it tighter.

But look at the fellow inside. When he gets topsy-turvy, when he loses his judgment and thinking himself to be wise, he becomes a fool. And so

he goes to his board, to his board fence, and takes a hammer and is pounding the board because that's how they were put on, wasn't it? By pounding.

Except he pounds them from the inside. And what's the effect? It loosens the fence. Now imagine the neighbor's dog, the rabbit dog, coming up and sniffing around and finding that loose board on the fence.

And by nose and by paws, it can move the board and swing it and soon get it open enough so it can scoot in. And it can bite and terrify and bring many problems. So, what we have is a case where the Scripture says, give no place to the devil.

See, what happened was, by numbering, David gave place to the devil. And by unthankfulness, they gave place to the devil. And you can be certain of this, if you give place, if I give place, the devil's going to take it.

That's all he's looking for. So unthankfulness is kicking one of the boards loose in the fence of protection. The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him.

But the fear of the Lord is to hate evil and to disobey is to, in a sense, embrace evil. And so it loosened one of the boards. And into Israel came the enemy and David persisted against all the warnings of his associates.

Seventy thousand people died. They had a witness in Romans 1, within and without, and they ignored it and were unthankful. And so then the enemy was able to affect their imaginations and affect their appetites, and everything got out of line.

Now, I suppose that the enemy finds greater success with the family of God on this issue than any other single temptation confronting his children. At least that's true with me because I have a constant battle, not continuous every day, but constant in the sense that it's not one that I leave very long. That verse that says, in everything give thanks, because it is just so easy for us to fail to realize the consequences of not instantly obeying God.

What's the scriptural pattern? What's the pattern? What hits us when

we

permit something, when something comes into our life that we don't handle by obedience immediately to give thanks? Some years ago when Dorothy Okuma, who's with us now, staying in the home and is here, and Dorothy Okuma's father, Washington, whom you know is here, we spent some hours together and I gave him the five deadly deeds. He claims it was six and possibly seven. Very well could have been because you can add two of them.

They're all there. But the other day or a week or two ago, I was talking to him on the phone and he was telling me of certain experiences through which he and the family are passing and he said, I want you to know how deeply grateful I am that you shared these with me and I'm working at it and I have some idea. You see, when something happens in your life or mine that we are not pleased about, whatever it is, our first tendency is to blame someone, to find fault, to assign a reason.

And when we do that, our eyes come away from him and come in on the circumstances. What God has enjoined us, what he's commanded us, what was read for us a few moments ago was this, in everything to give thanks and giving thanks always for all things. I say it's difficult because it's not natural.

It's not the easy way. What they did in Romans 1 is the natural thing to do. What David did was the natural, logical thing to do.

Find fault, find blame, get a reason, get an excuse. That's logical. But it's not scriptural.

The scripture is to go against logic and to realize that this thing, whatever it is, couldn't have touched me if my Heavenly Father hadn't permitted it to touch me, that I'm surrounded by His presence. And if that thing, whatever it is, that touched me did, it had to go through a nail-pierced hand to reach me because I'm sheltered in His hands, the hands that hold the world. So if anybody or anything touches me, it has had to first get permission from Him who surrounds me.

Now, it could very well be that I've given place to the enemy. It could be. It's possible.

As long as we live in the flesh, it's a possibility. But even in that event, I still have to say, Thank you, Father. So, the logical thing is to place blame and to get an excuse, but the scriptural thing is to say, Heavenly Father, regardless of why or regardless from whom this came, it still had to come through your hand of love.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for it.

That's what we're supposed to do. Now, what if we don't? What's the natural consequences of unthankfulness? Regardless of whether we don't consciously take these steps, it's just that that's what happens. When we fail to give thanks, without any voluntary action on our part at all, we become disappointed.

Now, we're not disappointed in God. That's too honest. We're disappointed in man.

We're disappointed in him. We're disappointed in them. We're disappointed in the organization.

We'll always find somebody else, but maybe ourselves. We are disappointed. I made a promise to God and I failed it.

I'm disappointed in me. I thought they were. So the person or the organization or whatever, disappointment.

No Christian can ever afford to gratify the devil by being disappointed because he recognizes that once he's got us to accept disappointment, he's got us on a downhill pole with a tailwind on understanding on ice. He's got us. We've got to resist disappointment for the consequence of sin that it is.

Now, if disappointment is continued, the next thing that's going to happen is that we're going to become discouraged. I thought, but it didn't work out the way I thought. I planned.

Well, really, I was counting. But, and so we become uncouraged, discouraged. You see, disappointment is failure to glorify him as God.

Discouragement causes us to become vain in our imagination. Well, I tried it and it didn't work. Why should I try again? I'm uncouraged.

And that leads to disillusionment. I thought I saw a city out there,

just a mirage, just heat waves. And now we're getting down where the foolish heart is darkened.

Instead of seeing that city whose builder and maker is God, as did Father Abraham, all we see are the ruins of light expectations. Same thing that happened in Romans can happen in us. And then the disintegration of morale.

And how often other sins occur in the life of Christians after they've been disappointed and discouraged and disillusioned and they say, what's the use? And the enemy comes in and something happens and temptation and opportunity and other sins take place. And finally, defeat. That's what took place in Romans 1. That's what happened with David.

That's what's happened in my life. And I'm sure if we were equally honest in that opportunity, you'd admit it's happened in your life. What do we do about it? What do we do about it? How do we get out of the mirage? How do we get out of this sinkhole, this quicksand? What must we do? We were told, weren't we, in everything give thanks.

So this Thanksgiving I'm hoping you're going to make a list of all of the hard, difficult, unpleasant, unsatisfactory experiences of the past 12 months and you're going to go through them on your knees and you're going to say thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. Through your tears, it's all right. Telling God that you're lying behind your teeth, I don't care.

But just do it. And if you'll start out doing it, God will meet you and you'll find that you'll break up the fountain of the deep and something's going to happen in your heart and before you're finished, you're going to be able to say thank you, Father, and mean it because the Spirit of God has met you. That verse says, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go you out to meet him.

And if you'll just take that first step, Oh God, I'm going to obey your word even though I'm lying to myself, I'm going to obey your word. And I'm going to say thank you, and I don't really mean it, but your word says in everything give thanks, but I'm going to do it. You'll be amazed how quickly that God will answer that little step of obedience and

release his power in your heart, and you're going to start to realize that all those things that seem to be so against you weren't really.

You see, God sovereignly said, Anything that touches the child of my love has to work together for his good because my purpose is to conform him to the image of my Son. That's my overall purpose because for whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. So he's going to permit experiences to come into our lives in the ensuing year until Thanksgiving again.

But it just seems to me, the warnings and exhortations and promises of Scripture, that the wisest thing for us to do is to have our own Thanksgiving service. No other pilgrims around, please. This is just between me and him.

And I'm going to go over the past 12 months, and I'm going to give him thanks. I'm going to do it. I've tried.

In fact, I've been doing it this week, getting ready to talk to you because I figured it'd be a mighty sad thing for me to talk to you about it and not have started at least. But sometimes it's like building an altar, and you get all the stones laid up and it's nice and neat, and you turn around, rumble, rumble, and your altar, all the stones roll down again. And you've got to go back and put them up one at a time.

Have you ever had that experience? You get this total commitment to the Lord on the altar, and then you turn and walk away, and down they go, rolling all over like bowling balls. And you've got to get them again and put them up. Because he said, in everything give thanks, not just once, but do it.

So let's do it together, shall we, so that we don't carry past Thursday of this week anything that's going to serve as a canker or an irritant or an infection in our spirits. So we'll just say, Thank you, Father, and mean it. See, you better start today because that's only four days.

Heavenly Father, it's not easy. It's not easy to be a people anyway. It's not easy to be a Christian person.

Tremendous responsibility and tremendous tasks and great and glorious privileges. But so, Father, so often, Father, it's little foxes that tear down the vines and spoil the grapes. Like that little fox in the life of David when he just vainly numbered the people and brought thine

anger and wrath down upon him.

Unthankful, unthankful. Oh, Father of Jesus, don't let us be in that number, but let us be with those who understand thy grace and thy power and thy love and know that nothing can touch us, that we who are the apple of thine eye, unless it's first gone through that hand that was nailed to the cross to redeem us. All things do work together for our good and for thy glory as thou dost shape us and mold us into the image of thy Son.

That's what we want, Father. Oh, we sing it. We mean it.

Oh, to be like thee. Oh, to be like thee, blessed Redeemer. Pure as thou art, come in thy fullness, come in thy fullness.

Stamp thine own image deep on my heart. So to that end, Father, this Thanksgiving, let us carry nothing beyond the day. Let everything go through that healing flood of obedience to thy word and to enjoy thy promise.

In Jesus' name and for his sake we ask it. And for our sakes, too, Father. And for the sake of our family and friends, bring it to pass that we give thee all the glory in the honor and for the praise of the land that was slain.

Amen.

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